

St. Paul: On The Same page

for 11.02.14 All Saints Day

Day One: Revelation 7:2-17

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number... ¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence."

I once asked a family at a funeral home, "Did your dad pray?" They answered, "Oh yes! He often went to the cemetery and talked with his mother and father."

Let me suggest, if in your prayers you are trying to talk to your Christian relatives, then you're getting a busy signal. God revealed heaven to John, who says that the believers there are busy "day and night" praising God. If you were to receive a real

message from beyond the grave, it would be this, "Hey! You should be turning to Jesus – not to me! I'm busy!"

Jesus once told a story about a man who wanted to send a message from Hell. During his lifetime he had ignored his Savior and focused only on his riches. Now, although he suffered in Hell, wanted to tell his living brothers this, to repent and believe and find salvation.

But Jesus said, if they did not believe the Scriptures which told them the way of eternal life, then they would not believe even if someone came spoke to them from the dead.

Some people are focused on their personal or family heroes, putting their hopes in a saint. Some are waiting for a mysterious word "from the beyond" or a sign from a loved one. But those who have gone before us have eyes only for Jesus – and so should we.

Prayer: Father, I look forward to your blessings in heaven, but lead me to use my time here in the same way, praising you and lifting up your name. Amen.

Day Two: 1 John 3:1-3

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

“The world does not know us...” What does John mean by that statement? Don't lots of people know you?

Not really. We love to be known by others. We might be a little uncertain about having actual fame and all the troubles that come with it, but we love it when others recognize us, when they remember our name. We like having lots of friends on Facebook, or receiving cards and letters at Christmas time.

But who really *knows* you? Those who know you best are the few people that you trust enough to be vulnerable with them. You allow them to know your weaknesses. They sometimes tease you about your failures

and that's OK because you are confident of their love for you. But “the world” doesn't know you this way. For most people you wear a disguise that covers up your vulnerable parts.

John says that the world cannot really know who we are as believers in Jesus. It can only judge us according to worldly terms – whether we are strong or fast or talented or smart or rich or successful. The world decides if we are attractive or lovable.

But Jesus knows us as we truly are. He knows us as he has made us to be – forgiven, holy, pure, and lovely. Jesus knows us as his beloved Bride.

Look at the people who go to your church. Do they seem lovely to you? When you see them with worldly eyes you are aware of all their faults. One is clumsy. Another made a poor choice of clothes today. Several seem hoity-toity to you. But the truth is these are your sinful sisters and your broken brothers.

See them with Jesus' eyes today.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for calling me “beloved.” Help me to love my brothers and sisters with Jesus' love. Amen.*

Day Three: Matthew 5:1-12

⁵"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Non-Christians often mock these verses. They complain that it is the greedy and the selfish, it is the 1% who are inheriting everything. But if everything were only as it appeared to be, then Jesus would not need to tell us anything, would he? He would just say, like we do, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

But no. Jesus told us this precisely because it is something we cannot see. "The rich," he said, will only enter eternal life like a camel through the eye of a needle. As hard as it is to believe, there is great blessing in being poor.

I know, you believe that and yet you don't believe it. We always think that if we just had a little bit more money, then we'd be happy. That's exactly the curse of wealth. It leads us to trust in wealth. If a little bit helped, then wouldn't a lot be even better?

If my daily bread is a good thing, then wouldn't daily chocolate, and daily angel food cake, and the tenderest cut of

Kobe steak, and all the other things I crave be the very best?

Actually, no.

We know from experience the meaning of "too much of a good thing." But we don't associate that with money.

In order to find the blessing that Jesus describes, we must be poor. Even if we do not give away all our things, we still must take away their power over us. We must take them off of their throne and make them only things, not gods. We make them into things when we use them as God intended, to be a blessing to others.

It doesn't seem like the meek inherit the earth. But the truth is, the rich and powerful inherit pain and trouble, false friends and empty hopes.

Those who meekly follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd, find extraordinary blessing in serving others, in sharing what they have received. And Jesus will give to them a new heaven and a new earth.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, evil people seem to prosper, and many believers suffer. But I trust your word, Lord. I know the real end of this story! Help me be follow you meekly. Amen.

Day Four: Matthew 5:1-12

(continued)

¹⁰ *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Veteran's Day is coming up soon. There are millions of men and women who have served in uniform, and they are all different. Certainly, they don't all know one another. And yet, when we stand to honor them, they all have this in common. They have made a sacrifice together for the same great purpose. It would be a great blessing and honor to be a part of that group.

You may not be a military veteran. But those who believe in Jesus are part of another army. We endure, some with great hardship and some with less, the attacks of Satan and the world. But we are part of a group that will be honored and blessed when we finally celebrate the end of this war. In heaven we will declare victory over sin, death, and the Devil.

All Saints Day, coming up next Sunday, is like a Christian Veterans Day. What veteran of the faith do you want to remember and celebrate today? Here are some heroes that you ought to know...

Pray for Asia Bibi, a woman in Pakistan who has been sentenced to death for blasphemy because she shared her faith in Jesus.

Winter comes even in Iraq, and tens of thousands of Christians who have been driven from their homes have only makeshift shelter. Pray for God to give them food and warmth. And then search for how you might be God's instrument to bless them.

In India, Pastor M (name withheld for his safety) was stabbed 10 times because of his teaching about Jesus. Pray for his recovery, and that you and he both may have the courage to continue to speak about Jesus.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the brave veterans who have served our country. Thank you even more for the many brave veterans of the cross who have fought the good fight and have passed along the faith. Grant that I may be among their number. Amen.